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SUBJECT: CANADA-FRANCE: VISIT OF FRENCH PM RAFFARIN

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. HANDLE APPROPRIATELY.

1.(SBU) DFAIT Director General for Western Europe Cecile Latour and Deputy Director Denis Robert characterized the brief (less than 24 hours) visit of French PM Raffarin to Ottawa as an unqualified success. The visit originally was conceived around Quebec's May 21-23 hosting of the annual meeting of Futurallia, an international business alliance (SME networking and "matchmaking") launched in Poitiers, France, in 1989. Raffarin apparently took a vivid interest in the development of Futurallia during his time as President of Poitou-Charente region. Though the focus of the visit was primarily bilateral cooperation in a number of areas -- including strong French interest in Canada as a model for "decentralization" of the government -- PM Chretien did commit to support a UN-led intervention in the Congo (a "small contribution"), should one come to pass.

2.(U) In a joint communique on May 22, Raffarin and Chretien welcomed the UNSC resolution on Iraq reconstruction as a "credible framework" for mobilizing the international community to assist in reconstruction of Iraq. They affirmed the central role of the UN and Security Council in the "collective treatment of regional crises and in responding to the challenge posed by the risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" and confirmed support for implementation of the MEPP Roadmap proposed by the diplomatic Quartet. The two PMs declared the importance of a "new-generation agreement" on Canadian trade and investment with the EU, and mutual commitment to bilateral efforts ensuring the success of the Doha Round. They reaffirmed commitment to prioritize development in Africa through the G8 Africa Action Plan, as affirmed at the Kananaskis summit, and agreed to "further develop" dialogue on implementation of Kyoto Protocol commitments.

13. (SBU) During the joint press conference on Thursday, Raffarin praised the UNSC resolution on Iraq reconstruction as a very promising sign for the future. He asserted France's solidarity with the U.S. -- particularly in the wake of the bombings in Riyadh and Morocco -- in combating terrorism and proliferation. The francophone newspaper La Presse reported that while Chretien also saw the resolution as a positive development toward enabling Iraq to regain its autonomy, he nonetheless reiterated that he disagreed with the manner in which the U.S. had imposed its will on the situation, noting that this was "not the customary way to change a regime."

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